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Talking Points

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The Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday approved, 11 to 1, the nomination of **Morton I. Abramowitz** as assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research. Abramowitz has been running the Department's intelligence bureau for more than a year; his nomination was a result of a decision to upgrade the position.

Abramowitz's confirmation therefore seemed secure until he tangled at hearings with Sen. **Jesse Helms** (R-N.C.) over the question of whether the newly created slot would be a policymaking position. Abramowitz said no, and refused on those grounds to answer one of Helms' questions.

Sources say that the State Department has tried hard to "clarify" Abramowitz's role, but apparently to no avail: It was Helms who cast the single vote against the appointment yesterday, by proxy.
